

BACKGROUND

During the postwar 1940s and 1950s, California experienced a tremendous population increase. Along with this came land speculation and a development boom never before witnessed any place in the Nation. Prime agricultural, ranch, and orchard lands were converted into sprawling residential tracts almost overnight.

As a result of this era of growth, the traditional purpose and structure of local government in California also underwent significant change. The demand for housing and municipal services mushroomed and the speculative nature of the development caused developers to seek the most expeditious and economical means of providing basic services such as water, roads, fire protection, and sewers.

During this period special district after special district were formed - many of them overlapping each other and providing like services to whomever asked for them without consideration of future development, land use, and long-range service financing.

Special districts became the local government of suburbia and municipalities suffered. With development moving away, cities experienced a deteriorating revenue base and a residual population of lower income residents. To counteract this, cities began annexing whatever territory they could. Because, however, of existing annexation statutes, cities were able to annex only the undeveloped land beyond or around developing suburbia. This type of annexation led to premature, unplanned development and irregular city boundaries.

By the late 1950s, California agricultural industry dwindled and cities began seeking state assistance to correct their blighted conditions. In 1958, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Sr., appointed a blue-ribbon commission to look into the cause and effect of these related happenings and to formulate solutions for restraining and correcting the situation.

As a result of these studies, the Legislature formed the California Boundary Commission organized at the state level and given review and comment authority over the boundaries of city annexations and incorporations.

The functioning of the Boundary Commission proved unsatisfactory from the beginning: it could offer no controlling solution to the creation of multiple special districts, and it did not have the authority to change the trend.

During 1961 and 1962, the Assembly Committee on Municipal and County Government held several lengthy hearings. All elements of local government

participated. It was decided that the problems facing the areas had to be dealt with on a local county level; that whatever institution was formed had to have decisive regulatory power; and, local answers to problems of urban sprawl and growth of local agencies required equal participation by the county and the cities to arrive at practical, workable solutions.

These principles became the cornerstone of the Knox-Nisbet Act, enacted in 1963, which created a local agency formation commission in each county in the state and charged them with the responsibility to discourage urban sprawl and encourage orderly growth and development of cities, districts, and communities. It is the regulatory body which sits between the citizens and various governmental agencies that provide municipal services.

The Commission holds a regular monthly public hearing with special meetings called and advertised as necessary. The public is invited to attend and give testimony. The LAFCO staff is available to meet with individuals and groups wishing to obtain or change necessary municipal services.